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8-22-2011

The positivity of difference

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Recommended Citation

Ngwenya, Zwelani, "The positivity of difference" (2011). *Bucknell Believes*. Paper 33.
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The positivity of difference

Imagine a world where everyone is of one language, one culture, one race and one uniform lifestyle: A world where everyone is equally smart or dumb, a world where everyone hails from the same political and socioeconomic background. My own imagination of this world is a display of a monotonous social sphere where interaction is not necessary. It presents to me a world where meeting new people cannot be a cause of celebration, what would be the need if we all shared the same life experiences. Human beings are different and I believe in the positivity and celebration of this difference. I believe in the positive face of difference.

I believe in the comprehension of difference not as a discriminator but as an opportunity to learn and somehow try to experience what I have never experienced in my life. I remember my first experience in an international school – a United World College of Southern Africa, Waterford Kamhlaba in Swaziland; I lived in a quad room with three other roommates. One was Italian, the second was Venezuelan and the other was German. I have vivid memories of how we used to laugh and enjoy talking about how different we were. One roomie from Germany used to get amazed as in utterly, stunningly and jaw-droppingly flabbergasted by the idea of me applying petroleum jelly on my body after bathing, because he never did, he assumed it was not necessary for me. One day we agreed on me not applying anything to my body after bathing. By noon my skin was white and dry and I looked as though I had never taken a shower ever since I was born, I was officially not good looking and an eyesore to those who became unfortunate enough to cast their eyes on me. And this is what my German roomie said..."I think you looked far much better with your jelly applied, how about you do that right now". We all laughed at the experience and I was happy he eventually understood how different we were.

The event with my German roomie ended in a euphoric mood. However whilst I celebrate the good way it ended, I cherish the lifetime lesson I learnt as a result. Had I reacted to his assertion of my lifestyle as a racist remark, things could have probably ended differently. I doubt we would have continued on our awesome path of mutual understanding. Instead of a racist attack I saw an opportunity of sharing a bit of my lifestyle and I believe my colleague benefited. We lived different lifestyles and we behaved differently but adhering to the positive aspects of our differences made our living enjoyable.

Every time I look around me and see a whole lot of different races, cultures and beliefs, I rejoice and feel an insurmountable amount of happiness stirring in my heart. All because I choose to focus on the positive aspect of our difference and that presents me a lot of advantages. I get an opportunity to teach and an opportunity to learn. I enjoy being in a diverse community because I believe in the positivity of difference.